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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 003229

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH GOES FOMIN ON SUMMIT,
INTERNAL POLITICS

Classified By: Ambassador H. Douglas Barclay. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (C) On November 14, the Ambassador met with Salvadoran Foreign Minister Francisco Lainez (strictly protect) at the Ambassador's request to discuss Summit of the Americas issues and Salvadoran domestic politics, inter alia. Regarding the Mar del Plata Summit, Lainez said that Saca had been very insistent about getting a private meeting with the President, especially after he was unable to talk with the President at the dinner. Lainez added that he was also uncomfortable because he knew a priori that Saca did not have any new points to raise with the President, other than to extend an invitation to visit El Salvador in January 2006, which Lainez knew the President could not likely accept.

2. (C) The Ambassador said that Washington would like Saca to become a regional leader and ally on issues like CAFTA, free trade, and democratization, among others, but that there was some disappointment that Saca left the Mar del Plata Summit early and did not stay to advocate for FTAA, as some other leaders had done. Lainez took in the Ambassador's message, and agreed that Saca should assume a strong regional leadership role. He said that he (Lainez) is having more access to Saca, but that Secretary to the Presidency Elmer Charlaix continued to try to block access. Asked who are Saca's closest advisers, Lainez responded that "it is the two uncles who raised him," and recommended that we get closer to them. Asked about GOES Washington Ambassador Rene Leon, Lainez said that Leon does have access to Saca, but that access is waning. Lainez predicted that Leon would be gone right after the March 2006 national elections, but that Leon would have to get a "golden parachute" to ease his exit.

3. (C) On domestic politics, Lainez opined that the present political party system, with only two predominant parties representing the right and the undemocratic left, was detrimental to building democracy. Lainez further stated that ARENA needs a credible opposition in the form of a moderate left, and that the decision to not certify the FDR was misguided. Separately, Lainez stated that Mrs. Saca would like to host a summit of Central American first ladies early next year and would like to invite First Lady Laura Bush. The Ambassador said he would pass the message to Washington.

4. (C) Comment: Although Lainez may be in good graces with Saca he still has several key detractors to worry about, including Ambassador Leon and the "palace guard" composed of Charlaix and Governance Minister Rene Figueroa. Lainez's candor is much appreciated and confirms his importance to us as a key GOES interlocutor.
Barclay